

*West R  
19/10/97*

**Rural District Council of Leeds**  
**(ROUNDHAY AND SEACROFT).**

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*Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the year ended  
December 31st, 1897.*

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*81* THERE have been altogether 35 deaths of all ages in the district. Of these, 24 occurred at Seacroft, 11 at Roundhay. Correction has to be made for persons dying violent deaths in the district, but not belonging to it, and of these there are three,—one to be subtracted from the Seacroft account, two from the Roundhay; another died at Manston Fever Hospital. Further, there is a death in the Seacroft district of a person only newly arrived there; ~~while the death of a Seacroft man newly migrated to Roundhay, a suicide, may be taken off the Roundhay list.~~ The sum total of Seacroft deaths is thus 21, and of Roundhay 9.

The population of Seacroft I imagine to be fairly stationary, increases by births being compensated pretty nearly by emigrations and deaths; while there are no fresh houses being built. Roundhay, on the other hand, continues to increase rapidly. As a whole, the population of the district must have increased, and I estimate it, allowing for excess of births over deaths and new houses occupied, as having increased by 160; which, added to the estimated number of last year, comes to 3,350. The corrected death-rate therefore appears at 8.9 per 1,000, a very satisfactory result. But the satisfactory part of the return belongs to Roundhay alone. The population of Seacroft scarcely exceeds 1,000—is probably somewhat below it—and the total of deaths is 22: a rate exceedingly large for a village district.

The births, 61 in all—the birth-rate per 1,000 is therefore 18.2; the deaths under one year number 6, all in the Seacroft district. The infantile death-rate, therefore, stands at 98 per 1,000 born; but this is much understating the facts, for which I cannot estimate by the births in Seacroft only, where all the deaths occurred: I have to count in the Roundhay births also, which are not separated in the returns. If half of the births belong to Seacroft, the Seacroft infantile mortality becomes 196 per 1,000. Six deaths occurred from zymotic diseases, viz. :—whooping cough, two; influenza, two; one each from scarlet fever and enteric; two deaths occurred from phthisis.

The health of the whole district, then, during the last twelve months, has been up to the average, both as judged by the death-rate and by my own experience of the sickness-rate. There has been no epidemic throughout the year: even the diarrhœa, which you so often see in the early autumn, and which laid Leeds waste and was fairly virulent in the country around us, has been conspicuous by its absence in anything like an epidemic form—a fact which again I attribute to the same causes as last year. There have been sporadic cases of scarlet fever and the like, as always.

That the death-rate of Seacroft separately from Roundhay should have been kept at about the rate of the two years preceding, in spite of the absence of such epidemic, emphasizes what I have said in former reports, as to the dreadful condition of the average village from a sanitary point of view. Seacroft is very healthily situated, as healthily, if not more, than Roundhay; and yet it has a death-rate more than double, while all of the six infantile deaths occur in that part of the district.

The fact is, that there is not enough care taken for the provision of wholesome dwellings for the working classes in the country. The houses are damp, ill-ventilated or draughty, wanting in drainage; the arrangements for the disposal of refuse (household and other) are bad. The soil round about the houses is damp, badly paved, or not at all paved, saturated with filth from the slops, the runnings of privies, pigsties and the like. The large families which are the almost invariable accompaniment, and, in fact, the effect of these conditions, (inasmuch as they tend to crush the self-respect and prudence of the persons condemned to live under them,) exaggerate the evil. There are a number of houses in Seacroft which would come under this description. The effect of conditions such as these, is not necessarily the incidence of any special disease, but an increased vulnerability to all diseases.

Part of these defects the Council is powerless to relieve, for the cause is economical: where houses are to let, the competition is between tenants who shall get the house, not between landlords as to who shall attract the tenant. Defects of detail you have improved, and are improving, as a walk round Seacroft will show you.- The Sanitary Inspector and I are making a house-to-house survey by degrees, and more detailed improvement will be done as that approaches conclusion. Furthermore, the radical improvement which you are contemplating, viz., that of draining the whole district in a satisfactory manner, is a measure which cannot fail, in time, to have a salutary effect on the health of the district. Roundhay is not crowded enough as yet to feel, in any very obvious manner, the disadvantages of the cesspool of the very worst type which prevails there; but it sooner or later was sure to have done so; and you will have deserved well of succeeding generations in the steps you are taking. If it will thereby be possible gradually to substitute for the disgusting country privy standing under the doors and windows of the houses, and shared in common by several houses—a practice which can hardly be condoned—wholesome water-closets for each house, the benefits gained will be incalculable.

With the institution of a good system of sewage treatment, which will do away with the leaking cesspool, our part will have been done to prevent the pollution of Killingbeck Lake, which was at one time the sole supply of the whole district, and at the present day is all that many persons have to depend on for drinking water. It is also drunk to this day by the cows on some farms, and is used for dairy purposes; so that our sewage may be widely distributed over Leeds in this manner. I do not mean to imply that Roundhay and Seacroft are the only polluters of this water.

The Isolation Hospital is not yet forthcoming, but there may be urgent need for it at any time. I would urge the Council to do all they can to promote its erection, either separately or in conjunction with some neighbouring authority.

There are four slaughter-houses in our district, all in Seacroft. Two are fairly well adapted structurally for the purpose; the other two, the oldest established, are not in the least fitted. In all cases they are too close to houses; they generally have cowsheds and pigsties immediately adjoining; in one case the only drain runs uphill, nor can it be arranged otherwise in our district. As this same drain receives some sewage from houses in the Tadcaster district, I am trying to arrange with the Medical Officer for that district to allow it to run into the Crossgates sewer, whereby we should get sufficient fall and accommodate both his and my district.

There could be no fair and just method of dealing with these save by abolishing all, and substituting a common slaughter-house, which would be self-supporting. The butchers keep the places as well as their opportunities will allow, but a nuisance they are, and must remain. The meat sold in the district is of good quality: there is no fault to find with that; in fact, bad meat would stand no chance of being sold, and I have reason to know that any doubtful carcase is got rid of elsewhere.



The cowsheds, with some notable exceptions, are not all that could be desired. Here and there they are ill-built; very generally the farmyard is beyond words—filthy, wet and ill-paved. The owners are some of them careless and ignorant of the mischievous effects of dirt. With the permission of the Council, I should like to have a printed paper circulated among all the cow-owners of the district, containing a few plain rules, and pointing out how far they are behind the times. The milk in most cases goes to Leeds, but our duty is not less to Leeds than to our own district.

I am glad to be able to state that at last there seems to be a universal recognition among medical men and householders of our having adopted the Notification Act. In the earlier part of the year, cases which should have been notified to me were notified to Leeds, by an easy mistake on the part of the medical men in attendance. But I contented myself with writing to these gentlemen, and latterly I have not heard of any failure to notify.

**B. BASKETT, M.B. Oxon.**

*January, 1898.*

